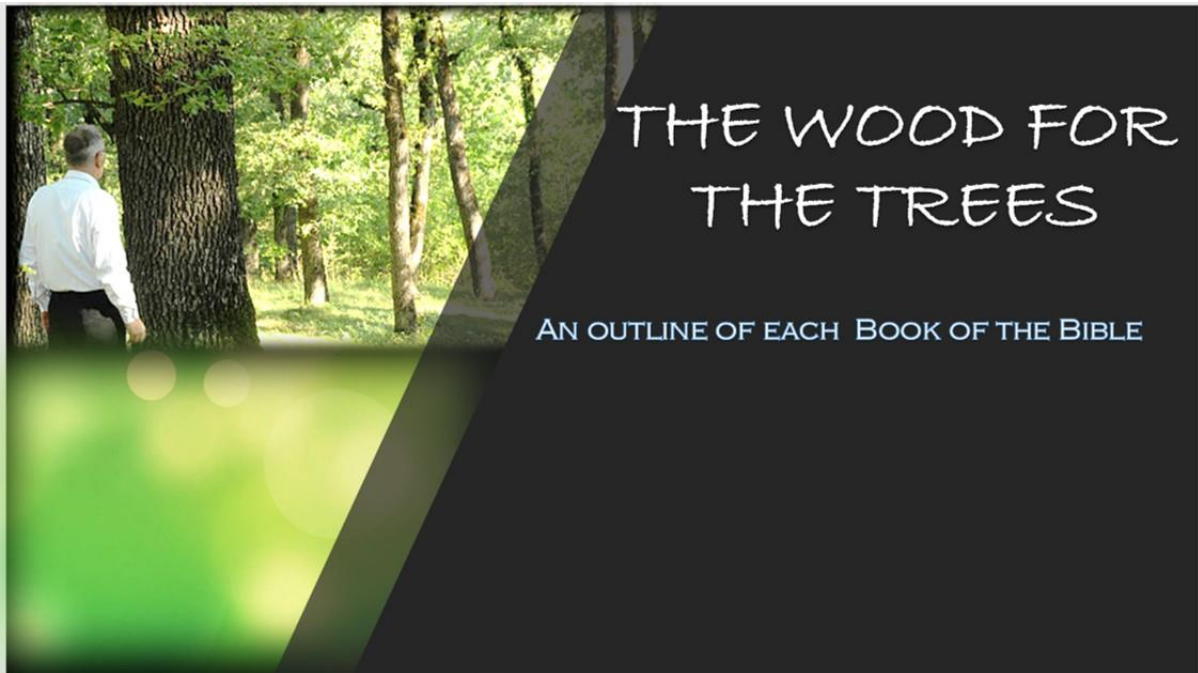


THE WOOD FOR THE TREES

An outline of each book of the Bible



The purpose of this study is to show how the books of the Bible fit together revealing Gods mind and plans. Detailed study of the Scriptures is of course essential, but there is a place for standing back and considering the bigger picture. At a moderate speed the Bible can be read in about 72 hours. All of the Bible points to one person and two events. The person is The Lord Jesus Christ, and the two events are His first coming and His second coming. His first coming was to deal with sin, His second coming will be to reign with those who have been cleansed from sin

GENESIS 1-11

Moses wrote the first 5 books of the Bible which Jesus called “The Law of Moses” (Luke 24; 44). Genesis is the foundation of God’s work as creator and Redeemer of His creation. It all begins here where we have the origin of everything (except God) that is, the universe, mankind, Gods plan to deal with sin, marriage, the family, the Sabbath, Gods judgment, human government, nations etc. We will look at the first 11 chapters and next time finish the remaining chapters in the book. In these first 11 chapters we have four events, and in chapters 12 to 50 we have four people.

Here are the events in the first 11 chapters

1. Formation
2. Fall
3. Flood
4. Fallout

1. Formation (Chapters 1-2)

First a word about the theory of evolution which teaches that the first living organisms came into being from the chance interactions of simple chemicals, and these organisms have gradually evolved into even more complex life-forms, and ultimately mankind. The theory is based on the fact that living organisms vary and that some variations reproduced more successfully than others (a process called natural selection) so species gradually changed to become more like their successful variants. Over millions of years these changes gave rise to different and more sophisticated organisms. There are huge scientific problems with this theory and we have better things to do than consider them here. No matter how far back you go, you have to explain where all that gas and all that space came from. You must, if you follow the theory of evolution, conclude that no one, plus nothing, equals everything.

The record of the formation of the universe is simple and straightforward, and we are left in no doubt, right from the beginning, that God created it all **“in the beginning God created the heavens and the earth”** (1:1). Gods Spirit hovered over the waters that covered the dark lifeless globe.

Why was the earth in this condition, well we don't really know. The words "**formless and empty**" (1:2) appear together only twice, first in Isaiah 34:11 (a prophecy against Edom) and second in Jeremiah 4:23 (a prophecy against Judah). Both instances describe the effects of God judgment. Some conclude that the earth was in this condition because of a catastrophe connected to the fall of Satan, but it may be that God simply created the earth in this unformed condition, a kind of blank canvas for God to fill with His beauty.

Let's look at the 6 days of creation

Day 1

God turns on the light, the Sun by day and the moon by night

Day 2

God sets up the hydrological cycle separating the water in the sky from the water covering the earth. It seems this "firmament" was different from the sky we have now. It has been described as a vapour canopy that surrounded the earth until the flood

Day 3

God brings the waters together into the oceans creating land masses. God then produced plant life, vegetation of all sorts, each with its own ability to reproduce itself through seeds

Day 4

God installs some celestial bodies, the sun the moon and the stars and instituted days seasons and years

Day 5

God creates birds and sea life

Day 6

The earth brings forth living creatures' wild and domestic

The cosmos shouts design.

David said “***The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands day after day they pour forth speech; night after night they reveal knowledge***” (Psalm 19:1-2)

- The earth is 93 million miles from the sun which has a surface temperature of about 10,000 degrees Fahrenheit. If we were as close as Venus the temperature would be about 900 degrees Fahrenheit, or in the case of Mars and its orbit, the temperature would be anywhere between minus 80 and 220 degrees Fahrenheit. In these extremes life could not survive
- The earth rotates 365 orbits around the sun each year. Some planets rotate very slowly. Suppose the orbit of the earth was 30 times a year, the days would be ten times longer and the nights too. There would be alternate events of freezing and heating.
- The earth is tilted 23.5 degrees on its axis giving us the beautiful array of seasons
- The makeup of gases in the atmosphere is 78% nitrogen, 21% oxygen 0.9% argon and 0.1 other gases just right for the sustaining of life on earth
- The proportion of water to land gives us the rainfall we have on the earth. If the oceans were a quarter larger the earth rainfall would be 8 times higher and the earth would be flooded. If the oceans were shallower the earth would be too dry
- Look at the sky at night and revel in the fact that the artists God is even greater than His art

A Pause.

After making the animals God pauses to speak. He breaks off from His work of creation and we hear Him plan His masterstroke “***let US make man in our image after our likeness***” All three Persons of the Trinity took part in creation. **The Father** purposed and designed the universe (1 Corinthians 8:6) He created it through **The Son**” (Hebrews 1:2 Colossians 1:16 and John 1:1-3). And He did it by the agency of **The Holy Spirit** whom we see hovering over the waters.

Adam

God makes Adam from the dust of the ground and puts him in a beautiful garden, not a mythical garden but a real one with a location associated with four rivers mentioned in the text. These are the rivers Euphrates, Tigris, Pishon and Gihon. Scholars believe the garden would have been somewhere in what is now Iraq.

Eve

Chapter 2:18 “***and the Lord God said it is not good that man should be alone I will make him a helper comparable to him***” Adam is tasked with naming all the animals which God brought to him, but there was nothing comparable to him. God caused a deep sleep to fall on Adam and as he slept God took a rib from his side and made from it a woman. God brought her to Adam and he breaks into a love song “***This is now bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh She shall be called woman because she was taken out of man***”

Let's consider this word “**helper**” and be clear that men and women are equal in status. The word translated “helper” is the Hebrew word “ezer” which is used of God sometimes noting that He is our helper. “***O Israel, trust in the LORD; He is their help and their shield. O house of Aaron, trust in the LORD; He is their help and their shield. You who fear the LORD, trust in the LORD; He is their help and their shield***” (Psalm 115:9-11). We would certainly never view God as subservient to humans nor should we understand the role of “helper” in Genesis 2:18 as a position of subservience. The concept of an “ideal partner” would convey the thought best

The 7th day The Sabbath

God finishes all His creative work and pronounces it “**very good**”. God does not tell us when this day ended, as in the case of the other days that ended with evening and morning. The Sabbath day continues to the present day. Genesis is a place where many Bible themes begin and the Sabbath is one of those themes. The Sabbath is a day of heaven on earth, a token of eternity when all is exactly as God planned. It's the foretaste of a perfect world when all is in harmony. It's a picture of the wonderful life that people in Gods kingdom enjoy. We will follow the theme of the Sabbath as it occurs through the scriptures.

Cain and Abel

Eve gives birth to two boys, Cain the firstborn and Abel. Abel is a prophet (See Luke 11:49-51) a righteous man in fellowship with God. The two brothers each offer a sacrifice to God, but God did not approve of Cain's sacrifice. This isn't, it seems, because Cain's offering is bloodless (fruit and vegetables). It's because Abel offers his in faith (Hebrews 11:4) He brings God the very best he can, the firstborn and the fat the choicest part of the animal. In contrast, there was no indication that Cain's offering was the best he had, that is the best of the crop. His heart isn't right with God and this will soon be demonstrated by the murder of his brother Abel. God won't accept sacrifices from people whose heart isn't right with Him. See for example Isaiah 1:10-17). God provided Adam and Eve with another son to take Abel's place and his name was Seth. Eve called him Seth saying "**God has appointed for me another offspring instead of Abel**" Seth's direct descendants included Noah Abraham David and finally Jesus Gods promised offspring.

New creations

Gods people are new creations (2 Corinthians 5:17 and Galatians 6:15). Our lives were in chaos and darkness but Gods Spirit moved on us as He did over that lifeless earth. (2 Corinthians 4:6). The account of creation is a picture of how God gives new life and uses the same two principles

1. **He separates.** He separated light from darkness, waters from the sky and land from sea and He separates us from the kingdom of darkness (Colossians 1:13. He commands us to be separate from darkness and unrighteousness (2 Corinthians 6:14-18)
2. **He commands fruitfulness.** God commanded animals and humans to be fruitful and He makes His people fruitful as we come to bear the fruit of the Spirit(Galatians 5:22-23)

See also how God creates through His Spirit and His Word. The Spirit of God was "**hovering over the face of the waters**" (Genesis 1:2) and God created through His word "**and God said**". We are **born of the Spirit**" (John 3:8) and we are born again through His word (! Peter1:23). We are exhorted to be "**filled with the Spirit**" (Ephesians 5:18) and we are to "**let the word of Christ**" dwell in us richly (Colossians3:16). Gods Spirit and God's word work together to bring life

2. Fall (Chapters 3-5)

God had given mankind only one negative command, that was not to eat from a particular tree in the garden namely the “***Tree of the knowledge of good and evil***” (2:17). Everything else, all the good things in Eden were theirs to take freely

Satan

Satan appears to Eve and tempts her. Now we need to understand that the word “serpent” is actually to be translated “Shining one”. Eve was not confronted by an ugly creature with horns who might have instantly repelled her. This was Satan appearing as an angel of light as Paul mentions in 2 Corinthians 11:14 “***and no wonder! For Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light***” Satan questioned God’s Word and Gods motives (Chapter 3:1-7). That day marked the beginning of what the Bible calls “the world” a term used especially in the New Testament to describe the system of thinking and behaving that opposes God. (1 John 2:16; 5:19). God had pronounced His world as good, but now Satan has intruded with deception and destruction. Satan came to commandeer Gods world and Adam handed him the title deeds.

The darkest day

This was the darkest day in the history of the human race where all our problems began. Paul puts it like this in Romans 5:12 “***Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned***” When Adam disobeyed God he acted as the representative of every human being and the effects of what he did would spread to everyone throughout history. Death would spread to all men, and every one born would have the sin virus, a sin nature. Now childbearing would be in pain and man would have to work the ground to feed his family. Satan’s future was spelled out, God would defeat him (Genesis 3:15). This was God’s plan of redemption. Eventually a descendent of Eve would give birth to the Saviour a Son who would undo everything Satan had accomplished in the garden. Gods rescue plan was set in motion.

3. Flood (Chapters 6-9)

If you look at Satan's desire to wipe men out and disrupt God's plan to save them, the announcement of a flood must have caused him to respond with a rousing cheer. However he underestimated God who made a covenant with Noah (Genesis 6:18) and told him to build a boat and provided the specifications (Genesis 6:14-16). Taking the cubit of at least 20.4 inches the ark would have been approximately 510 feet long, 85 feet wide and 51 feet high. It has been calculated that the ark would easily house the several thousand animal kinds God brought to Noah. The biblical ark is one of the largest wooden ships of all time, a mid sized cargo ship by today's standards. It has been suggested by the critics that the building of the ark was beyond the skills and tools of that day, but this is simply arrogance and ignorance. Adam's descendants were making complex musical instruments forging metal and building cities, their tools machines and techniques were not primitive.

An interesting note

In the book "Noah's Ark: A Feasibility Study" creationist researcher John Woodmorappe suggests that, at most, 16,000 animals were all that were needed to preserve the created kinds that God brought into the Ark. Woodmorappe used a "worst case" scenario of the Biblical "kind" being equated to the genus level of classification. Using a short cubit of 18 inches (46 cm) for the Ark to be conservative, Woodmorappe's conclusion is that less than half of the cumulative area of the Ark's three decks need to have been occupied by the animals and their enclosures. This meant there was plenty of room for fresh food, water, and even many other people. Noah's cubit was probably longer, like the royal cubits used in the pyramids of Egypt and elsewhere.

Long life before the flood

Now of course we believe Adam and Eve were created to live eternally but the introduction of sin brought death (See Gen 5 "and he died and he died and he died"). Why did people live so much longer before the flood? There are several possible reasons suggested.

1. The degenerating process had only begun to take place with them and their immediate descendants

2. There would have been a lack of disease at this early time. Since Adam and Eve had fallen from a perfect state, it would have taken time for disease to increase
3. If earth were to be populated by humankind then long life spans at the beginning would have been a necessity
4. Climatic conditions could have been a factor. There was a possible water vapour canopy that surrounded the earth before the flood. This would have produced a worldwide greenhouse effect resulting in mild climate throughout the earth. In addition this canopy would have shielded man from harmful radiation which has an effect on the process of ageing. At the flood this canopy collapsed and no longer afforded protection

Methuselah

Why did he live longer than anyone else? He died at the ripe old age of 969. Putting aside all the environmental factors of a pre-flood world where people lived longer than they do today, the answer has more to do with the merciful character of God.

When Methuselah was born the text of Genesis 5 indicates that his father Enoch began to walk with God in earnest (Gen 5:21-22). Many commentators believe that it was during the time of Methuselah's birth that God revealed to Enoch the reality of the coming flood, which is why Enoch spent the next three centuries warning the world around him of God's intending judgment (Jude 14:15).

Methuselah's name can be translated variously as "man of the javelin" or "man of the sending forth" or "when he is dead it shall be sent" and that name referred to the coming judgment, a global flood that would be sent forth with sudden force and destruction. The implication is, that this wrath, this flood, would not begin until after Methuselah died. He lived 969 years and if you add the length of time between his birth and Noah entering the ark you have (187+182+600) i.e. 969 years. This means that in the very year Methuselah died the flood was sent forth like a javelin on the earth. So why did God allow Methuselah to live for so many years longer than anyone else in human history. Surely as an illustration of God's incredible patience and longsuffering. From the time God revealed the reality of the judgment to come to Enoch it was almost a millennium before the rain began.

Methuselah's long life fits with Peter's depiction of God's patience in 2 Peter 3. After discussing the flood (in verses 5-6) the apostle writes in verses 8-9

“ For this they wilfully forget: that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of water and in the water, ⁶ by which the world that then existed perished, being flooded with water. ⁷ But the heavens and the earth which are now preserved by the same word, are reserved for fire until the day of judgment and ^[b]perdition of ungodly men.⁸ But, beloved, do not forget this one thing, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. ⁹ The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance”.

4. Fallout (Chapters 9-11)

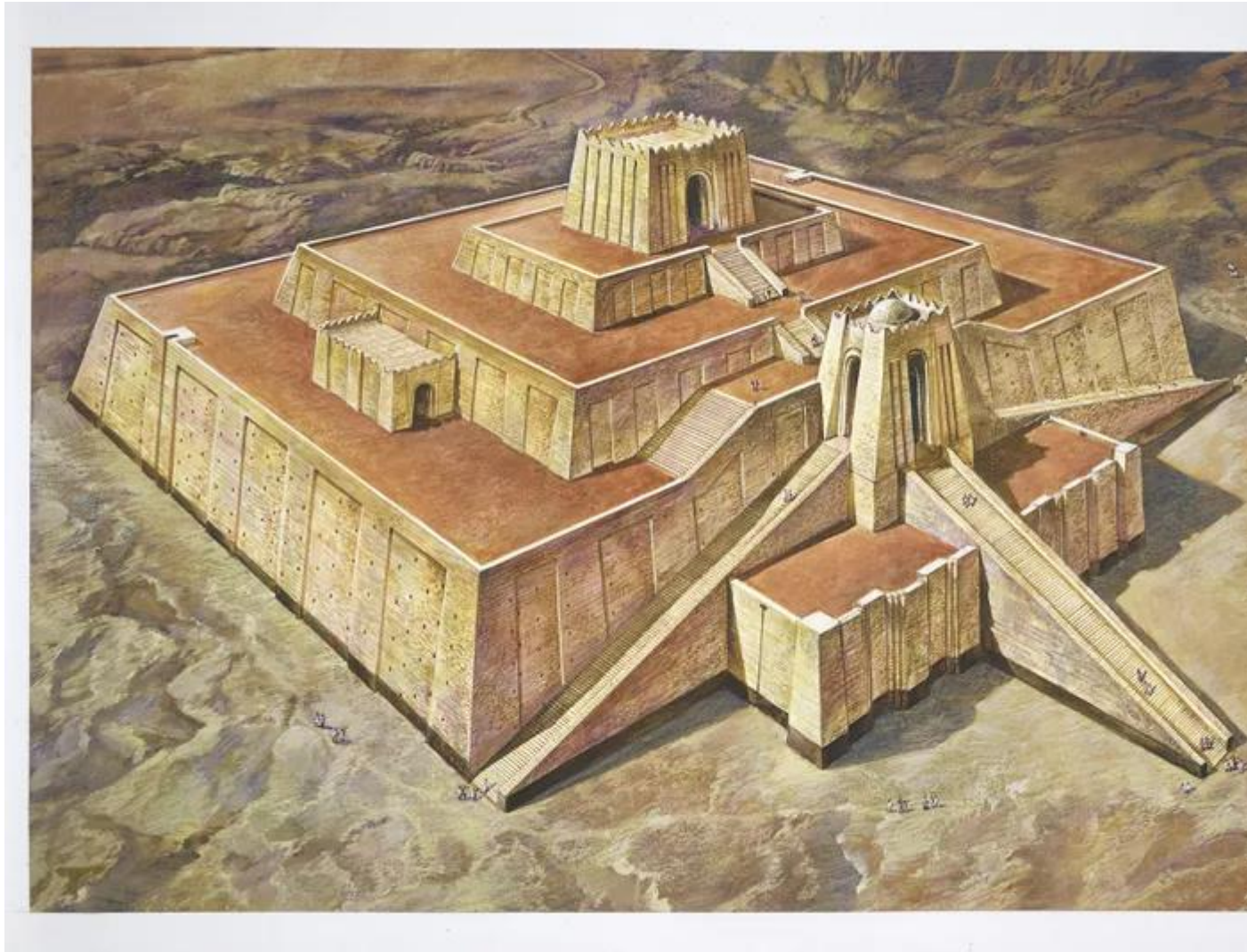
God promised never to send another flood like the Genesis flood and made a covenant the sign of which was a rainbow. (Chapter 9:12-17) After the flood people and animals followed God's command to be ***“fruitful and multiply”*** (Genesis 8; 17; 9:1). We have the account of Noah becoming drunk and being naked and the reaction of his three sons. Ham humiliated his father and violated Noah's dignity, but Shem and Japheth out of reverence to their father stepped backwards and covered him. Noah curses Canaan Ham's son but he blesses Shem and Japheth (9:24-27). There follows a long genealogy (10:1-32) sometimes called “The Table of Nations” a kind of sketch map of ancient history. Below is a map of the nations catalogued in Genesis chapter 10



The Tower of Babel (Genesis 11)

From history's dawn until many years after the flood mankind had one language and culture. Sometime after the flood people settled in a plain in the land of Shinar and there they began to build a city and a tower. This was an act of self-assertion against God, a revolt against Him. They built a city and a tower so they weren't "***dispersed over the face of the whole earth***" (Genesis 11:4). They wanted to establish a power base, a secure united society, but God had commanded them to multiply and spread out. They wanted to make a name for themselves to find fame through their own achievements. The name "Babel" in the local language "Akkadian" means "the gate of God" and the tower was possibly a certain kind of ziggurat which were temple towers with a shrine at the top. In the Bible we find God meeting with His people on mountains and it seems the inhabitants of Babel wanted a holy mountain to have contact with heaven. Below is a picture of a ziggurat which had stairs leading to a shrine at the top

which they saw as a stairway from heaven to earth, that is where heaven touched earth.



God intervenes to save mankind from ruin. He shattered mankind's power and fragmented them into language groups of which incidentally there are over 800 within the Island of New Guinea alone. By impeding communication God slowed the development of human civilisation to a safer place

God has always wanted humanity to be one united under His Lordship. On the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:1-13) the Holy Spirit began to gather His new community from every tongue tribe and nation. Babel was reversed on that day

1. God confused the language of Babel but at Pentecost everyone heard Gods wonderful works in their own language
2. God scattered the people of Babel but at Pentecost people from every nation under heaven were gathered together.